



## Do psychological capital and communication skills affect entrepreneurial intention? A study on students studying at a university in Turkey

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study was to demonstrate whether students' perception of psychological capital and their communication skills have an impact on their entrepreneurial intention. In the study in which descriptive research method was applied, hypotheses were created for the purpose of the research. The data from the sample were collected with the survey technique and the findings were tested with quantitative data. According to the results obtained from 369 undergraduates, who are study at a public university in Turkey, it was observed that there were positive relationships between their communication skills, psychological capitals and entrepreneurial intentions. Also, results indicated that psychological capital affects entrepreneurial intention more than communication skills. Besides, among the sub-dimensions of psychological capital only self-efficacy has positive effect on entrepreneurial intention, the others have no significant effect.

Keywords: Communication Skills, Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurial Intentions, Psychological Capital;

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## 1. Introduction

There is a continuing discussion that entrepreneurship is an innate trait or a later acquired trait. In response, it can be said that entrepreneurship is not an innate trait. In addition, it has stated that entrepreneurship is influenced by culture, sociology, economic and political processes (Balaban and Özdemir, 2008: 146). One of the most important views that have been accepted recently is that entrepreneurship has a critical role in the civilization process. In this context, entrepreneurship has contributed to the development, economic and social development and labor of a country (Sesen et al., 2014: 93). With the increasing importance of entrepreneurship, public institutions as well as private sector organizations, families and even an entire country are engaged in various activities for the generation of an entrepreneurial generation.

Years ago, the important problem was that: “Entrepreneurship should be taught or not?”, today it is sure that entrepreneurship should be taught. But today’s critical problem is that: “How should entrepreneurship be taught?” With this new direction, entrepreneurship education of university students receives more importance. Entrepreneurship education process should be well designed and distinct from traditional business education (Kuratko, 2005; Gartner et al., 1992). And at this point it is important to increase the entrepreneurial intentions of university students.

It is critical to identify what factors affect their entrepreneurial intentions so that university students can be encouraged to start a business. In this point of view two factors are seen meaningful to focus on. The first one is the communicational skills of the students, and the second one is the psychological capitals of the students. In this study, we analyzed the communication skills and psychological capital which are the important factors affecting the entrepreneurial intention, to increase university student’s entrepreneurial intention levels.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 2.1. Entrepreneurial Intentions

Although the concept of entrepreneurship was initially considered only in the field of economics, it has now become the relevant field of all sciences (Şeşen and Basım, 2012: 21). Because of the increasing importance of entrepreneurship, private and public institutions, schools and all states are engaged in plenty of practice to increase the level of entrepreneurship of person. In this respect, entrepreneurship can be considered as one of the most important indicators of a country's development and welfare level. Thanks to entrepreneurship, companies in the national economy can compete and be dynamic in the long run (Cuervo et al., 2007: 1).

Studies on entrepreneurship mainly focus on the personality trait that indicates whether an individual has an entrepreneurial decision (Schwarz et al, 2009: 274). For instance, such factors as need for achievement (McClelland, 1961), risk-taking propensity (Brockhaus, 1980), locus of control (Brockhaus, 1982), and tolerance of ambiguity (Scherer, 1982) have been defined and studied as possible traits associated with entrepreneurial behavior.

According to Romanelli (1989), the assumption underlying these studies stems from the existence of unique characters that are identified and isolated with the personality of the entrepreneur. (Boyd and Vozikis, 1994: 63). Entrepreneurial intentions have emerged as a result of cognitive processes such as actions that activate the essence of the organization to which the entrepreneur is affiliated, a business idea, knowledge and equipment, and direct action (Bird, 1988: 442). Two important factors that cognitive and contextual or environmental factors related to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial intention are discussed (Franco et al, 2010: 262). In this context, students can have an entrepreneurial intention with the experience they have gained from their environment. Similarly,

through the curriculum of many entrepreneurship curricula, they evaluate what entrepreneurship means by a cognitive process.

On the other hand, the individual's entrepreneurial personality traits are complex and formed on a mental process. When evaluated from this perspective, Ajzen's (1991) Theory of Planned Behavior explains how the individual's entrepreneurial intention emerged within the framework of mental process (Liñán, 2008: 257). According to Ajzen (1991), the behaviors of individuals are shaped according to their intentions. In this context, the intention of entrepreneurship also has revealed the entrepreneurial intentions of an individual's idea or attitude of starting a new business.

In today's competitive and ambitious business world, new job opportunities and working conditions are increasingly constrained and differentiated. As a result, many newly graduated students are concerned about not finding a job. According to Keat and his colleagues (2011: 206-207) nowadays, new graduates are expected to have education knowledge equipped with entrepreneurship idea and skills. It is also believed that young people who have a new business idea in creating an entrepreneurial opportunity will be more successful in the future. Depending on this, many studies proved that a very few students tend to start their own businesses and a large number of them refrain from giving their opinion yet. (Franco et al., 2010: 260).

## 2.2. Communication Skills

Communication is generally defined as “the process of transferring thoughts, emotions, attitudes and beliefs from an individual to an individual, from individual to group, from group to individual, from group to group, from community to group and from society to society” (Güney, 2007: 261). Communication has three basic elements: sender, recipient and message. In this context, the phenomenon of communication involves the verbal or non-verbal expression of the individual's message to another person (Barret, 2006: 386). Based on these definitions, communication is considered as a process. In this process, the atmosphere formed between the sender and the recipient emerges as a reaction to the results of the message to be transmitted (Adejimola, 2008: 202-203). The solution of interpersonal problems is mainly based on communication. Healthy, logical and successful communication prevents individuals from becoming unhappy. On the contrary, individuals may be restless (Korkut, 1996: 19). From this perspective, it is obvious how healthy communication is important for people.

The concept of communication skills is defined as “initiating and maintaining the conversation and expressing their feelings and thoughts clearly in verbal and non-verbal ways” (Kabakçı and Korkut, 2008: 80). According to Omololu (1984), individuals with high communication skills can do that listening, comprehensively speaking, eye contact, encouraging way to express oneself verbally or non-verbally (Cihangir, 2004: 8). In this respect, interpersonal communication skills can be expressed as a multidimensional, operational, stable process. In qualified interpersonal communication processes, the goals and objectives of the individual can be explained by the perception and interpretation of the recipient (Hargie, 2010: 42).

There are various studies in the literature about entrepreneurial intention and communication skills, which are the two variables of this research. According to Liñán (2008), a significant relationship was found among students' perceptions of leadership, their entrepreneurial intentions communication skills. Besides, Communication skills are important in shaping the entrepreneurial intentions. At the same time in the study conducted by Bozkurt and Alparslan (2013), the students who have higher social and communication skills towards their environment have positive attitudes towards entrepreneurship. In addition to these in the literature, there are researches (Volery and Muller, 2006; Oosterbeek et al., 2009; Keat et al., 2011 etc.) that observe the increasing

entrepreneurship potential of students in educational curricula where effective communication skills courses are available.

In the light of these literature-based findings, the hypothesis of the study was developed as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>: Communication skills have a positive impact on entrepreneurial intentions.*

### 2.3. Psychological Capital

Positive psychology is a scientific working area that studies about what makes the life better (Leimon and McMahon, 2018: 9). And the psychological capital is a new concept in positive psychology. Like traditional concepts as social capital, intellectual capital, or cultural capital, the term of capital can also be used to represent human resources as a capital for organizations.

All types of capital (social capital, intellectual capital, or cultural capital) is also important for traditional organizations to the success and competitive advantage of organizations both today and tomorrow business life. However, for today's business world a new concept borned as "positive psychological capital" (Luthans, Luthans & Luthans, 2004:46). According to Larson and Luthans (2006: 7) while human and social capital are now widely recognized and have more attention, psychological capital as a way to value and manage human resources is just emerging.

In today's business world psychological capital is a psychological resource that may fuel growth and performance at the individual level. But it does not finish with individual level and make some effects on organizational level. Similar to human and social capital, psychological capital may provide leverage, return on investment, and competitive advantage through improved employee performance (Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa and Li, 2005: 5) to make positive effect on organizational level.

A simple definition of psychological capital is that, it is concerned with people's strengths (rather than weaknesses and dysfunctions) and how they can grow and thrive (rather than be fixed or maintained) (Luthans, Norman, Avolio and Avey, 2008: 220). According to Envic (2005: 44) psychological capital is an important resource for the organizations, as a person's sense or view of his/her ability to utilize the financial, human and/or social capital successfully he/she brings to an organization in a productive manner.

Unlike traditional viewpoint that the best places to work is where that promise lifetime employment but, rather, nowadays those that provide their participants with the opportunities, resources, and flexibility for sustainable growth, learning, and development. Today's talented employees are looking for employers that can contribute to sustaining their career progress (Luthans, Youssef and Avolio, 2007a: 6). By avoiding a preoccupation with personal shortcomings and dysfunctions and focusing on personal strengths and good qualities, today's leaders and their associates can develop self-efficacy/confidence, optimism, hope, and resiliency, thereby improving both individual and organizational performance (Luthans, Luthans and Luthans, 2004: 45).

Self-efficacy/confidence, optimism, hope, and resiliency are the dimensions of psychological capital. And these four sub-dimensions are surely psychological states, not psychological traits. Generally, a trait is something a person either has or does not have, development is not possible on traits. But a state involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in almost anyone (Envic, 2005: 44). Probably the distinctive feature of an individual's psychological

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capital and its contribution to practice is that it is open to change and development (Peterson et al., 2011:431).

Luthans and his colleagues define psychological capital as follows (Luthans, Youssef and Avolio, 2007a: 3):

“Psychological capital is an individual’s positive psychological state of development and is characterized by:

- having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks;
- making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future;
- persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and
- when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success”.

These four positive psychological capacities are meeting the above psychological capital inclusion criteria of being positive, unique, theory and research-based, measurable, developmental and manageable for performance impact in the workplace (Luthans, Youssef and Avolio, 2007b:13).

Most of the researches on psychological capital have been in an individual context, but in this study, we argued that psychological capital may also provide insights into why someone intend to be an entrepreneur while others do not. So, we decided to provide contribution to training our young generation.

Gorgievsky and Laguna (2008) claimed that having high levels of psychological capital, and its sub-dimensions the entrepreneur may be more able to focus on gains, and to move on through the challenges of the entrepreneurial process successfully. In other words, an individual who has high level of psychological capital tends to have a greater intention to be an entrepreneur as a career option. Sebor and Tanriukoskula (2011) analyzed the relationship between psychological capital and entrepreneurial intention on college students, and the results showed that the students with higher levels of psychological capital tend to have more intention to be entrepreneurs. Also, Contreras and his colleagues (2017) found that psychological capital and its sub-dimensions are affecting the entrepreneurial intentions of business students. According to this literature we developed this hypothesis:

*H<sub>2</sub>: Psychological capital has a positive impact on entrepreneurial intention.*

### **3. Research Methodology**

The research was been handled methodologically with descriptive and relational reasons. With the findings obtained from the sample with quantitative data, the hypotheses created for the purpose of the research were tested. On the other hand, survey technique was applied to collect the data of the research. Detailed information on the sample and the scales of research variables is provided below.

#### **3.1. Sample**

The sample of the study consists of students studying at a university in Turkey. The questionnaire technique was used and data were collected from 369 students. The statistics regarding the demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics About Sampling

Department	n	%	Gender	n	%	Average of Age
Business and Management	202	54.7	Male	162	43.9	21.43
Economy	33	8.9	Female	207	56.1	
Finance	98	26.6	Total	369	100.0	
Public Administration	36	9.8				
Total	369	100.0				

Participants' average of age was 21.43 years. Forty-four percent of the students were male (n=162) and fifty-six percent were female (n= 207). Students was mostly educated in the department of business and management (n= 202). On the other hand, very few of them stated that they studied in economics (n= 33).

### 3.2. Measures

All scales used in this study were translated from their original languages into Turkish. All items in the scales were rated as 5-point Likert scale type ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

•**Communication skills scale:** The communication skills scale developed by Ersanlı and Balcı (1998) was used. The scale, which consists of 45 items, is a three-dimensional scale (emotional, cognitive and behavioral communication skills). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.77.

•**Psychological capital scale:** The questionnaire for psychological capital applied from twelve items from the short form of Psychological Capital Questionnaire, which was developed by Avey et al. (2011). This scale evaluates self-efficacy/confidence with 3 items, optimism with 2 items, hope with 4 items, and resiliency with 3 items. The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was 0.82, and subdimensions' Cronbach's alphas were between 0.63 and 0.86.

•**Entrepreneurial intention scale:** Entrepreneurial intention of individuals were tried to be determined by the 6-item entrepreneurial intention scale developed by Liñán and Chan (2009). In this study, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the scale, which covers entrepreneurship intention in one dimension, was 0.90.

### 3.3. Results

Table 2 shows the inter-correlation matrix among variables and descriptive statistics. The communication skills, psychological capital and entrepreneurial intentions averages are between 3.28 and 3.59.

According to the results achieved from correlation analysis, all the variables and sub-dimensions of psychological capital were positively correlated with each other. The results were shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Mean Score, Standard Deviation and Correlations among Variables

	Mean	Std D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Communication Skills	3.39	0.31						
2 Psychological capital	3.47	0.65	0.411**					
3 Self-efficacy	3.55	0.90	0.349**	0.700**				
4 Optimism	3.49	1.30	0.177**	0.732**	0.226**			
5 Hope	3.28	0.73	0.356**	0.722**	0.451**	0.306**		

6	Resiliency	3.59	0.73	0.368**	0.680**	0.414**	0.247**	0.481**	
7	Entrepreneurial Intentions	3.52	0.96	0.301**	0.357**	0.337**	0.193**	0.252**	0.262**

**Note:** All correlation values between variables were statistically significant ( $p < 0,001$  \*\*;  $n = 369$ ).

At the other stage of the research findings, simple linear regression analysis was performed among variables to test the hypotheses of the study. It was presented that simple linear regression analysis results below:

Table 3. Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results for H<sub>1</sub> and H<sub>2</sub>

		R <sup>2</sup>	F	β	Sig.
H <sub>1</sub>	Communication Skills	0.09	36.512	0.301	0.000
H <sub>2</sub>	Psychological Capital	0.12	53.486	0.357	0.000

According to the results in Table 3, communication skills positively affect entrepreneurial intention ( $\beta = 0.301$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). It can be said that the entrepreneurship intention of the students was explained by their communication skills at a rate of 9% ( $R^2 = 0.09$ ). According to the results **H<sub>1</sub> was supported**. To test H<sub>2</sub>, psychological capital included to the regression analysis as the independent variable and entrepreneurial intention as the dependent variable. Psychological capital positively affects the entrepreneurial intention ( $\beta = 0.357$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ) and it accounted for about 12% of the total variance of entrepreneurial intentions ( $R^2 = 0.12$ ). According to the results **H<sub>2</sub> was supported**.

After determining the positive effect of psychological capital on entrepreneurial intention, the sub-dimensions of psychological capital were analyzed separately. In Table 4 regression analysis results of the sub-dimensions of psychological capital and entrepreneurial intention were shown.

Table 4. Simple Linear Regression Analysis Results for Sub-dimensions of Psychological Capital

	R <sup>2</sup>	F	β	Sig.
Self-efficacy			0.243	0.000
Optimism			0.092	0.076
Hope	0.135	15.311	0.062	0.294
Resiliency			0.109	0.059

Table 4 shows that among the sub-dimensions of psychological capital only self-efficacy effects entrepreneurial intention positively ( $\beta = 0.243$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). The other sub-dimensions have not significant effect on entrepreneurial intention.

#### 4. Conclusions and Suggestions

The main purpose of this study was to demonstrate whether students' perception of psychological capital levels and their communication skills have an impact on their entrepreneurial intention. According to the results, psychological capital levels and communication skills of students have positive effects on entrepreneurial intentions. In this context, it can be considered that psychological capital, which is a subject of positive psychology, is a useful premise in developing and creating new and different business ideas of the students. Similarly, it can be stated that the students who dominate the communication skills in a healthy way are more entrepreneurial.

If the results of the research findings are discussed in detail, entrepreneurial intention levels of university students in the sample was quite high. On the other hand, both communication skills and psychological capital positively affect entrepreneurial intention. These findings are parallel with the literature (Contreras et al., 2017; Moriano et al., 2012; Sebora and Tanriukoskula, 2011). And it is useful for researchers and especially practitioners who want to increase the entrepreneurial intentions of individuals. The more capability in communication and the higher levels of psychological capital leads to more intentions to start a new business or innovate a new process. When comparing the effects of two variables, it can be seen that psychological capital effects entrepreneurial intention more than communication skills. So, individuals who wanted to increase the entrepreneurial intention and entrepreneurship, must focus on the psychological capital.

This is an important finding because if psychological capital could be understood as a source of entrepreneurial intention in business life, then the individual with higher levels of psychological capital will tend to have higher motivation to be entrepreneur. In literature, there is evidences that entrepreneurial intention goes to entrepreneurship (Jakopec et al., 2013).

After the effects of communication skills and psychological capital on entrepreneurial intention determined, sub-dimensions of psychological capital were analyzed. Among the sub-dimensions of psychological capital only self-efficacy has positive effect on entrepreneurial intention. This result confirms previous findings obtained by several researchers (Moriano et al., 2012; Boissin, et al., 2009; Chandler & Jansen, 1997; Chen, et al., 1998). This means that if the self-efficacy of the individual increases, the entrepreneurial intention of him will be higher. Because self-efficacy encourages individuals to strive to successfully accomplish challenging tasks. This is the most important contribution of the study that we need young generation who have self-efficacy to have new ventures, growth economy and wealthy country. At this point of view families, educators, academicians and employers need to focus on increasing self-efficacy of young generation. They should encourage and motivate young people to think and make new and different things.

This relation between psychological capital and entrepreneurial intention of university students has another important implication. It seems possible to encourage entrepreneurial intention of students through improving their psychological capital, which with the well-designed education system. Because Luthans (2002) claimed that psychological capital is a capacity that can be developed.

Finally, the research has some limitations. Therefore, it is not possible to disseminate the research in general. The findings were obtained only from data obtained from a single sample. For further research, the consistency of these variables with the data obtained from different samples can be discussed.

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